

ANNOUNCER: From our host, Mayor Francis Slay.

MAYOR SLAY: Good morning. It's great to be back and it's always great to be with former St. Louis and Mayor Anthony Williams from Washington, D.C.

To understand my great enthusiasm for the subject matter of this conference, you have to know something about our city here in St. Louis. In 1876, our ancestors set boundaries for the city that anticipated a rate of growth and a density that we outgrew within decades and they voted to separate us from the surrounding suburban county.

In subsequent years, we supported river traffic over railroads, grounded our economy in heavy manufacturing, invested heavily in an industry that made relatively expensive garments and shoes and stored nuclear waste at our airport. We allowed highways to be build through our neighborhoods and retained a housing stock held firmly together with lead-based paint. As people and jobs moved out of the city's set boundaries, they left behind a large amount of deteriorating infrastructure, older, dilapidated vacant buildings and lots and a whole heck of a lot of environmental problems.

We have not been in the past a city to watch for trends until now. We sit next to one of the busiest stretches of a great river and we are a manageable size. We have preserved much of our historic building stock in the city. We have held on to almost every park and green space that has ever been built including a 1300 acre urban gem that is 500 acres larger than New York Central Park and which houses some of the iconic buildings, landscapes and monuments in the Midwest.

Our universities, research facilities and medical centers are ready made incubators of life science technologies and we have inherited good habits of riding bicycles, walking and getting outside to meet our neighbors and new waves of immigrants have lent us a vitality and diversity that spices up our Midwestern heritage.

All we need to take advantage of our natural acquired resources were partners. Over the past ten years, we have completed or have begun planning a range of projects that illustrate the importance of cooperative conservation and the great results it makes possible. I would like to tell you about some of them.

Since it's inception in 1876, Forest Park has been our region's backyard, its soul. It is used by more than 12 million visitors every year and it is home to our art, science and history museums, to one of the world's

great free zoos and to several complex ecological systems. At one of the proudest moments, it housed 1904 World's Fair.

By the mid 1980s, it was apparent to all of us that years of deferred maintenance and unfunding had led to serious deterioration of the park and we knew we had to act quickly. In response to the park's needs, we formed an organization, nonprofit organization, called Forest Park Forever. It was a partner with the city with the explicit and bold goal of remaking Forest Park into the finest urban park in America. A master plan was developed that would both preserve the park in perpetuity while satisfying the changing demands of the park's tenants and users.

With a plan in mind, the city and our partners including the state and federal governments raised more than \$90 million between us including a passage of a local half cent sales tax and began to address a catalog of improvements to the park's infrastructure, environment, landscape, water systems, athletic facilities, trails, stables, roads and historic buildings.

Generous citizens and corporations now raise approximately \$3 million a year for ongoing maintenance while the endowment has already grown to more than \$12 million. Volunteer gardeners already donate approximately \$500,000 worth of free service and labor every year. With this transformation, Forest Park has become a much studied national model for urban park renewal and it remains an exemplary public-private community development story.

In 2002, voters of the City of St. Louis and surrounding counties of St. Louis and St. Charles separately approved the Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative. Another local sales tax to create and fund a regional parks and recreational district. This mission of the district is to work for a clean, green and connected region. At the heart of the effort is the development of the river ring, a system of greenways, parks and trails that will connect neighborhoods and projects to each other and to similar projects on the Illinois side of the river the enhance the quality of our lives and the region. Eventually, the river ring will be 600 mile web of more than 45 greenways that will crisscross the region.

Since 2002, the Great Rivers Greenway has undertaken a wide range of projects across the district in partnership with municipal, state and federal governments and public and private agencies as well as with private and nonprofit organizations. It also has begun planning for a bicycle and pedestrian connection across McKinley Bridge

which provide for a downtown river crossing for bikers and hikers.

Just last week, the Great Rivers Greenway added financial support to the federal and private funding for the planning, design and site development for the first federally-funded, federally-designated underground railroad site in the state, the Mary Meecham Freedom Crossing. When it is completed the Freedom Crossing will commemorate the bravery of the some of our city's residents during the period of slavery. These four projects alone involve our city's partnership with two states, several major federal agencies, other municipal governments, a bi-state compact, dozens of private, nonprofit and profit organizations, a couple of community and neighborhood groups and a local business community.

When I welcomed you here yesterday, I reminded you that there was a riverfront just to the east of the front door of this convention center. I did so only half in jest because a highway, a street scape and years of development have managed to cut us off from the riverfront and from two of the region's most prized assets, the National Parks Services, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, also known as the Arch and the river itself.

One of the city's most important resource partnerships with the Federal Government involves plans to improve the Mississippi Riverfront downtown to better compliment the Arch and its grounds. Since the Arch was completed in 1965, the city has struggled to take better advantage of its presence here. Earlier this year, the Great Rivers Greenway provided funding for a comprehensive plan for the downtown St. Louis Riverfront that will identify an extension of the riverfront trail south of the Gateway Arch as well as identify and engineer a series of riverfront development projects along the riverfront.

Former U.S. Senator Jack Danforth has agreed to explore funding for the plans and the implementation and the Danforth Foundation has agreed to advance significant amounts of additional funding for the design of the riverfront work and a construction of a lid over the depressed lanes of Interstate 70 immediately to the west of the Arch.

Only slightly further in the future is the product of an even more ambitious project. The Chouteau Lake and Greenway concept was first developed in 1999 by McCormack Baron & Salazar, a private development firm here. The original plan centered on a modern recreation of historic Chouteau's pond, once the recreational heart of

St. Louis which was drained to kill mosquitos and replaced by the emerging railroads in the 19th century. A second version of the plan proposed removal of the remaining blighted influences to the south side of the downtown and the connection of several promising development areas including the Cardinals new ballpark and ballpark village entertainment area to other development activities in the central business district.

The city is now in the process of taking this exciting and extensive concept and breaking it into pieces that can actually be designed and built. The new lake will compliment the ballpark and expand our major development southward from the nexus of the ballpark and the ballpark village, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Downtown Now, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the GRG, HOK Planning Group, URS and variety of downtown businesses have contributed to the initial design activities overseen by McCormack Baron. I am very excited about what this ambitious initiative could mean for our economy and our lifestyle.

Before I knew the phrase cooperative conservation, I told our citizens that economic development was a team sport. I knew that we could do much more and so much better if we built partnerships, created teamwork and worked together. We have been favored here with good federal partners, the Parks Services, Ms. O'Dell and our senior U.S. Senator Kit Bond, our local and our regional HUD officials, the EPA, Local Region 7's office and others whose cooperative efforts have only been enhanced by the White House order that convened this conference. And the results of our partnership have exceeded everyone's expectation and are finally models for the rest of the country.

By the way, for the first time in 50 years now, there are more people moving into the city of St. Louis than moving out. Thank you all for your attention and again please enjoy the rest of your stay here in St. Louis and have a productive conference.